

BEST PRACTICES

HOUSE REPUBLICAN CONFERENCE
Vice Chair Lynn Jenkins

Action Items

Staff:

Communications,
District, Policy,
New Media

Targeted Audience:

New Citizens,
Constituents
concerned about
immigration,
Media

Top Points:

Engage in the
immigration
discussion.

Keep the
message positive.

Outreach to new
constituents.

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2013 Best Practices:

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Naturalization Ceremonies

Presented by the Office of Chairman Bob Goodlatte

How it works:

- ❖ Our District Staff is notified by the United States District Court Clerk's Office when a Naturalization Ceremony is scheduled in the area.
- ❖ Staff works with the Court to arrange an opportunity for the Member to speak – either as the keynote or to provide a welcome.
- ❖ If the Member is attending, our office will invite local media to attend. (You may want to check with the Court beforehand.)
- ❖ If the Member cannot attend, a staff member will attend on his behalf.
- ❖ Staff brings congratulatory letters to hand out to new citizens with information about our office's services.
- ❖ The Member helps the U.S. District Court Judge congratulate each new citizen and also presents them with a letter, which includes information about the office.
- ❖ After the event, staff or the Member will take time to mingle with the new citizens and their families.
- ❖ These events generally last approximately one hour depending upon the number of new citizens.

The Benefits:

- ❖ Regardless of your position on immigration reform, this is an opportunity to promote individuals utilizing the immigration system the *legal* way and taking proactive steps towards citizenship.
- ❖ Listening to the stories of the new citizens about why they wanted to become citizens is inspiring and a good reminder of the goal of our immigration system.
- ❖ It is also a time to remind new and current citizens that our rights do not come without a price to be paid for them. With citizenship comes great responsibility.
- ❖ These events tend to draw a significant media turnout whether the Member plans to attend or not.
- ❖ This is a great opportunity for the office to make contact with new constituents.
- ❖ By working with the Court on this, the office has also built a good working relationship with these folks.
- ❖ Requires very little preparation or office resources.

Goodlatte Hails Legal Path

By Preston Knight

Date: March 5, 2013

HARRISONBURG - Justin Kissi recalls playing soccer as an 8-year-old in his native Ghana and stating to others that he was going to go to the United States when he grew up.

"I didn't know where it was," he said, "whether it was in heaven ... or in the earth."

Kissi, 52, found his way to the U.S. in 1996 to help translate a co-worker's research. He gained citizenship status in 2006 and took a job for the U.S. Postal Service in Front Royal.

In U.S. District Court in Harrisonburg on Monday, Kissi shared his story as he supported his wife, Olivia, during her naturalization ceremony.

A Winchester resident, Olivia Kissi, 46, was one of 47 people from more than 20 countries who became naturalized citizens.

"I'm not going to take this for granted," she said.

The ceremony was an emotional milestone for all involved Monday, and it was fitting that 6th District Rep. Bob Goodlatte, R-Roanoke, was there to congratulate them.

Goodlatte is chairman of the House Judiciary Committee, which is holding hearings before proposing comprehensive reform to the nation's immigration law later this year.

He said the process to reaching reform will be deliberate. It will, however, be unlikely to include a direct path to citizenship for the country's estimated 11 million undocumented immigrants, which Goodlatte and other conservative Republicans perceive as akin to amnesty.

On Monday, Goodlatte thanked the naturalized citizens for coming to the U.S. lawfully. He then described the rights each one could enjoy before finishing with a few cautious words.

"But these rights do not come without a price to be paid for them," he said. "This precious freedom that we enjoy in this country ... is never more than a few years or more than a generation away from being lost."

After the event, he said he tries to attend as many naturalization ceremonies in the district as his schedule allows.

"The 50 individuals who became citizens today have taken the appropriate steps to obtain legal citizenship in this great nation," Goodlatte said. "We are a nation of immigrants and our immigration system has contributed to the greatness of the United States."

Immigrants lawfully admitted for permanent residence in the United States can apply for naturalization.

Among the requirements immigrants must meet, they have to continuously live in the country as a permanent resident for at least five years and have had a physical presence in the U.S. for 30 months of that time, according to the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services.

The immigrant must have resided in his or her state or district for at least three months, too.

Additionally, applicants must show good moral character and attachment to principles of the Constitution; demonstrate knowledge of U.S. government and history; be able to read, write, speak and understand common English words; and take an oath of allegiance.

The Kissis hope now that they are both naturalized citizens that their eldest daughter, Vivian Abila Worla Sallah, 28, will be granted a visa to come receive a long-needed breast implant.

"We don't do that in Ghana," Olivia Kissi said.

Her daughter, whose left breast never developed, has been denied a visa for eight years. She has self-esteem issues because of her physical condition, her parents say.

The United States, the Kissis and other naturalized citizens said Monday, represents the land of opportunity.

"In this country," said Belladean Mashingaidze, 24, a Winchester resident from Zimbabwe, "big dreams can be possible."

He and his mother, Violet Dube, also were naturalized Monday.

****Sample New Citizen Letter**

March 4, 2013

Dear New United States Citizen:

Congratulations on achieving United States citizenship. Your hard work and dedication to the principles of the United States is commendable and this ceremony has provided public recognition of your commitment to your nation.

U.S. citizenship confers many rights and privileges as defined in the Constitution and the Bill of Rights. Undoubtedly, these rights and privileges played some part in your original decision to leave your country of birth and begin the long and difficult process of immigration.

It is expected that in addition to the many freedoms to which citizens are entitled, they will also assume the responsibilities and duties of citizenship. This includes the privilege of participation in the political process and the right to vote. I urge you to add your voice to the millions that have come before you. The voices of the citizens – naturalized or natural born – need to be heard so that this country may continue to represent all of its diverse members. To register to vote, please contact your local Voter Registrar's office.

If I may ever be of assistance to you, please do not hesitate to call upon me. You may reach me at my Harrisonburg Office at the telephone number listed below. My staff and I are available to help you in matters involving federal agencies. In addition, we can provide assistance to you in ordering flags, applying to military service academies, requesting Capitol and White House tours and Presidential greetings, applying for federal grants, and seeking internship or page nominations. And of course, you are always welcome to share with me your views on federal issues and pending legislation.

I applaud your dedication and determination to seek out the United States as your new home. I wish you all the best as you continue to pursue the many opportunities that America has to offer.

Very truly yours,

Bob Goodlatte
Member of Congress